

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Claims 1-17 (Cancelled)

Claim 18 (New)      A communication system arranged to communicate under the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP), the system being arranged to not accept a TCP connection request unless a connection has already been negotiated.

Claim 19 (New)      A communication system according to claim 18, wherein the connection is negotiated by receipt at the communication system of a connection request message.

Claim 20 (New)      A communication system according to claim 18, wherein the request message comprises a datagram.

Claim 21 (New)      A communication system according to claim 19, wherein the connection request message includes data on the connection requested.

Claim 22 (New)      A communication system according to claim 19, wherein the connection request message includes information on a source of the connection request message.

Claim 23 (New)      A communication system according to claim 19, wherein the communication system is arranged to evaluate the connection request message prior to accepting a TCP connection.

Claim 24 (New)      A communication system according to claim 23, wherein the evaluation includes authenticating data within the connection request message.

Claim 25 (New)      A communication system according to claim 23, wherein the evaluation includes authenticating the source of the connection request message

Claim 26 (New) A communication system according to claim 23, wherein the communication system is arranged to negotiate an encryption key during evaluation.

Claim 27 (New) A communication system according to claim 18, wherein the or each communication system comprises a computer network communication protocol stack.

Claim 28 (New) A communication system according to claim 18, wherein the or each communication system comprises a network communications device.

Claim 29 (New) A communication system according to claim 28, wherein the network communications device comprises one of a router, bridge, gateway, firewall or switch.

Claim 30 (New) A program storage device readable by a machine and encoding a program of instructions for requiring a computer system to negotiate connection with a source system to be completed prior to acceptance of Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) communication packets from the source system.

Claim 31 (New) A data communications connection method for the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) comprising the steps of:  
prior to the establishment of a TCP/IP connection an initiating party computer system sending a connection request message to a receiving party computer system;  
receiving the connection request message at the receiving party computer system;  
opening a TCP connection at the receiving party computer system for the initiating party computer system, and, communicating between the initiating and receiving party computer systems using TCP communication packets.

Claim 32 (New) A data communications connection method according to claim 31, wherein the connection request message includes data on the connection requested.

Claim 33 (New)      A data communications connection method according to claim 31, wherein the connection request message includes information on the initiating party computer system.

Claim 34 (New)      A data communications connection method according to claim 31, further comprising:  
evaluating the connection request message at the receiving party computer system prior to accepting a TCP connection.

Claim 35 (New)      A data communications connection method according to claim 34, wherein evaluating the connection request message includes authenticating data within the connection request message.

Claim 36 (New)      A data communications connection method according to claim 34, wherein evaluating the connection request message includes authenticating the initiating party computer system.

Claim 37 (New)      A data communications connection method according to claim 34, further comprising negotiating an encryption key during evaluation.